

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

YEAR C

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

God in heaven,
as you and Jesus are one,
so share his life with us,
we pray,
that we may all live as friends.
Take away
our selfishness and pride;
let nothing come between us,
so that the world may know
that Jesus came from you
and now lives with you
forever and ever.

FOCUS OF THE READINGS:

As we near the conclusion of the Easter season, our readings focus on our future life with Christ. It is a life with the risen Lord which begins here on earth and culminates in our being with him forever.

In the first reading, Stephen, the first martyr, is given a vision of the risen Lord, "standing at the right hand of God." Stephen has fulfilled his mission; he has witnessed to Christ and now he goes willingly to be with him forever.

Chapter 17 of John's Gospel contains the priestly prayer of Jesus for the Church. This Sunday's Gospel gives us a small portion of that prayer. The first half is a plea that the Church will be united for mission, to give witness to Christ so that the world will believe that God sent Jesus into the world. The second half assures us that we will be with him always and will know fully God's love for us.

FIRST READING: Acts 7:55-60

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

When Stephen told the leaders of his people that they were guilty of killing Jesus, they became very angry.

But Stephen was filled with the Holy Spirit. He looked up to heaven and said,

"I can see Jesus standing
at the right hand of God."

The leaders of the people were so angry that they screamed at him and covered their ears so they couldn't hear him. Then they all ran at him, and threw him out of the city, and stoned him.

As they were throwing stones at him, Stephen prayed,

"Lord Jesus, take my life; I give you my spirit."

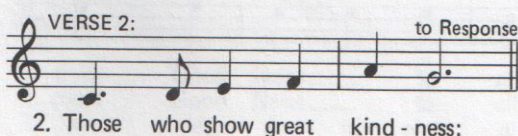
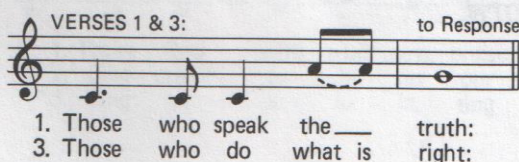
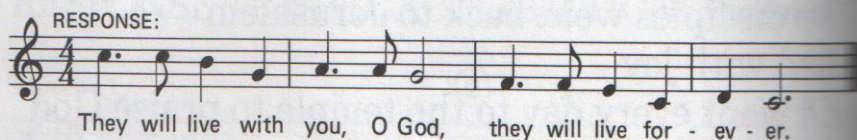
Then he knelt down and prayed,

"Lord, do not blame them for this sin."

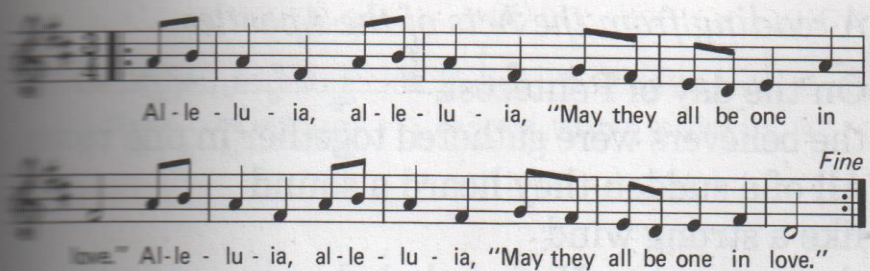
After Stephen said these words, he died.

The Word of the Lord.

RESPONSE: Psalm 15



GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:



GOSPEL: John 17:20-26

A reading from the Gospel of John.

While Jesus was teaching his disciples,
he looked up to heaven and prayed,

"Father, I pray for my disciples.

I pray also for all those people
who will believe in me

because of what my disciples teach.

I pray that they will be united
as you and I are united.

You are in me and I am in you.

I pray that my disciples will be united with us,
so that everyone will believe that you sent me.

I have shown them what you are like,
so that they will love each other
just as you love me.

"Holy Father, I want my disciples
to be with me always,

and to know that you love them
just as you love me."

The Gospel of the Lord.

REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

After the first reading, ask the children to recall the story.

- Why were the leaders angry with Stephen?
- How did Stephen act like Jesus?
- What did he say? Explain to the children what a martyr is. Stephen was the first martyr to give his life for Jesus. Ask the children how we can give witness to our faith in Jesus today.
- How can we show others that we believe in Jesus?
- Is that sometimes difficult to do?
- Why do people sometimes get angry with us when we speak the truth or stand up for Jesus and what he teaches?

After the Gospel, explain to the children that it is easier to stand up for Jesus when we are united with other Christians. Jesus prayed that we would be united so that others would see how we live and would believe in him.

- What did Jesus say in his prayer? Jesus also prayed that we would love one another very much, just as he is loved by God. He promises that those who are his disciples will be with him forever.
- How can we show that we are united with Jesus and that we are his disciples?